NCA
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AL ORTIZ/SANTIAGO JANUARY 30, 1978

EFFECTS OF CHILEAN PLEBISCITE

ANNCR:

IN EARLY JANUARY, CHILEANS WENT TO THE POLLS FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE THE 1973 MILITARY COUP AND VOTED IN A NATIONWIDE PLEBISCITE IN SUPPORT OF THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT HEADED BY GENERAL AUGUSTO PINOCHET. THE PLEBISCITE WAS ADVERTISED BY THE JUNTA AS CHILE'S RESPONSE TO INTERNATIONAL CRITICISM IN THE AREA OF HUMAN RIGHTS. V.O.A.'S AL ORTIZ FILED THIS BACKGROUND REPORT ON HOW THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION CHILE LOOKS NOW -- SEVERAL WEEKS AFTER THE PLEBISCITE.

VOICE:

ON THE EVENING OF JANUARY FOURTH, GENERAL AUGUSTO PINOCHET WAVED HIS ARMS IN VICTORY BEFORE THOUSANDS OF CHEERING CHILEANS AS THE PLEBISCITE RETURNS SHOWED THAT SEVENTY-FIVE PERCENT OF THE VOTERS HAD SUPPORTED HIS GOVERNMENT. THAT EVENING, PRESIDENT PINOCHET ANNOUNCED THAT THE RESULT MEANT THAT THERE WOULD BE NO MORE ELECTIONS FOR TEN YEARS. AND HE TOLD REPORTERS THAT THERE WOULD HAVE TO BE SOME DOMESTIC ADJUSTMENTS MADE IN LIGHT OF THE PLEBISCITE.

JUST WHAT THOSE ADJUSTMENT MIGHT BE WAS THE SUBJECT OF MUCH SPECULATION HERE IN THE DAYS FOLLOWING THE PLEBISCITE. BUT IT SOON BECAME APPARENT THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS NOT GOING TO ALLOW ANY RESURGENCE OF POLITICAL ACTIVITY. ABOUT TEN DAYS AFTER THE VOTES, GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES BROKE UP AN INFORMAL GATHERING OF MEMBERS OF THE OUTLAWED CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY, CHARGING THAT THE MEETING VIOLATED THE JUNTA'S BAN ON POLITICAL ACTIVITIES.

TWELVE OF THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS WERE BANISHED TO REMOTE TOWNS IN THE ARID MOUNTAINOUS REGION OF NORTHERN CHILE. AND THE JUNTA INFORMED THE UNITED NATIONS THAT NO U.N. HUMAN RIGHTS GROUPS WOULD BE ALLOWED TO VISIT CHILE UNLESS THEY AGREE TO CERTAIN NORMS TO GUARANTEE WHAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD CONSIDER AN OBJECTIVE INVESTIGATION.

THE U.N. GENERAL ASSEMBLY'S RECENT CONDEMNATION OF THE CHILEAN JUNTA FOR ALLEGED HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS PROMPTED PRESIDENT PINOCHET TO CALL THE PLEBISCITE. BUT PRESIDENT PINOCHET'S ACTION BROUGHT OUT THE FIRST PUBLIC DIVISION WITHIN THE JUNTA SINCE THE COUP. AIR FORCE COMMANDER GENERAL GUSTAVO LEIGH WROTE A LETTER TO PRESIDENT PINOCHET CRITICISING HIM FOR CALLING THE PLEBISCITE ON HIS OWN AND WARNING THAT IT COULD HARM THE PRESTIGE OF CHILE AND THE ARMED FORCES. AFTER THE PLEBISCITE, GENERAL LEIGH TOLD A NEWS CONFERENCE THAT THE AIR FORCE FULLY SUPPORTS PRESIDENT PINOCHET. BUT THE AIR FORCE COMMANDER LATER SAID THE PLEBISCITE ONLY SERVED TO FURTHER ISOLATE CHILE INTERNATIONALLY AND TO CONCENTRATE MORE POWER IN THE HANDS OF PRESIDENT PINOCHET.

SOURCES IN THE DEFENSE MINISTRY HAVE TOLD NEWSMEN LATELY THAT THEY ARE STILL EXTREMELY CONCERNED ABOUT THE CRITICISM CHILE HAS RECEIVED FROM ABROAD. AND CHILEAN WHO WORK ON BEHALF OF POLITICAL PRISONERS SAY WORLD OPINION HAS BEEN IMPORTANT IN SHARPLY REDUCING THE NUMBERS OF DISAPPEARANCES AND POLITICAL ARRESTS IN HE THE PAST TWO YEARS. BUT THESE LAWYERS CHARGED THAT LESS DRAMATIC FORMS OF HARASSMENT BY THE AUTHORITIES ARE ON THE RISE. SOURCES IN CHILE'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH ARGUED THAT THE FOCUS OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS PROBLEM HAD SHIFTED FROM POLITICAL ARREST TO THE TREATMENT OF THE POOR AND THE UNEMPLOYED.